

Driftless Area Art Festival September 17-18 in Soldiers Grove

Art lovers will soon descend on Soldiers Grove, Wisconsin, for the 2016 Driftless Area Art Festival, September 17 and 18. They'll come from all over the Driftless Region and well beyond. Last year's event drew visitors from 15 states and 279 zip codes.

Eighty artists, all from the Driftless Region, will offer fine handmade art including the following categories: ceramics, drawing and pastels, fiber, glass, jewelry, metalworks, mixed media, painting, photography, limited-edition prints, sculpture, and wood, including functional wares and furniture.

Some of the artists have donated works for the Silent Auction, open from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday and again on Sunday, with each day's winning bids available by 3 p.m. Proceeds from the Silent Auction help defray Festival expenses.

While they browse the tents and chat with the artists, visitors will enjoy musical entertainment. Saturday morning features The Lost and Founds; Saturday afternoon, Patchouli performs. Sunday's artists include The Roddys in the morning and Maritza in the afternoon.

Young visitors can view the works of fellow elementary school and high school artists in the Youth Art tent, where they and their families can browse the KidsArt Gallery and the Teen Art Gallery. Blue ribbons will be awarded in three elementary school categories, and the winning pieces will be offered at live auction next year, with proceeds going to the young artists' school art programs.

The Youth Art tent also offers a variety of craft projects, including pumpkin decorating and face painting. Kids can also award My Favorite Artist tags to anyone exhibiting at the Festival.

All Festival goers will receive ballots to vote for the People's Choice Award, celebrating visitors' favorites artists. Sponsored by VIVA Gallery in Viroqua, the People's Choice Award includes a blue ribbon, a \$150 stipend, and an invitation to exhibit at the VIVA Art Gallery in Viroqua, WI. Another competitive award, Best of Show, is selected by a team of artists not participating in the Festival. It's sponsored by J Gallery Interior Design Studio in La Crosse and includes a First Prize of \$500; two \$100 Merit Awards are sponsored by State Street Gallery, also in La Crosse.

And hungry art lovers will find a wide variety of taste treats offered by culinary artists from the Driftless Region. Vendors include Mary's Berries, Tri-R Catering, Apple'licious Pie Depot, Kickapoo Coffee, Watercrest Café, Food for Thought, the Dawg House, Crepes Jean Luc, and JT's Catering. The Soldiers Grove Lions Club will offer beer and wine.

The Saturday evening reception, open by invitation to artists, volunteers, Friends, Partners, Sponsors, and Patrons, starts at 5:30. It's a wonderful way to meet the artists and fellow art lovers, and enjoy refreshments prepared by chef Dani Lind of Viroqua's Rooted Spoon Culinary. This year's reception will also feature a live auction of the winning 2015 KidsArt pieces, as well as the Best of Show award presentations.

Now in its twelfth year, the Driftless Area Art Festival, set in Beauford T. Anderson Park, offers free admission, ample free and convenient parking, and the best of visual, culinary and

performing arts of the Driftless region. Saturday festival hours are 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Sunday the Festival opens at 10 p.m. and closes at 4 p.m.

Festival Partners include Community Development Alternatives, Inc.; Peoples State Bank and its 19 locations in Southwest Wisconsin and Northeast Iowa; the Village of Soldiers Grove and the Soldiers Grove Economic Development Corporation; and Wisconsin Public Radio.

The Art Festival website, www.driftlessareaartfestival.com, offers information on all aspects the festival, its artists, its benefactors and patrons, and opportunities for volunteering during the weekend. More information is also available on Facebook.